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may exterminate the black, he cannot lead or live with him" (p. 174).

The conclusion seems justified that the true philosophy of our relations to other "races" is nothing fundamentally diverse from a democratic philosophy of the relations of individual members of the same society to each other: this is the recognition of fundamental unity and equality amid a diversity of gift and aspiration which lends to the unity completeness and character. To this should be added faith in the future and its illimitable possibilities of good. To decline upon measurements of the merely physical and subhuman is not only to sacrifice to self-interest our humane aspirations, but to hide away the key of knowledge.

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IS AMERICA MORALLY DECADENT?

In every period of human history, when great social and political changes have occurred, the irreconcilable pessimist has wailed loudly and long. This wail is a natural phenomenon; it follows certain happenings as night follows day. Conditions are now ripe for pessimism; and the pessimist is abroad in the land. To-day is not the time for blind optimism; but are the American people becoming morally weak? Evils grave and dangerous confront us; but is it a fact that the first decade of the twentieth century is a uniquely degenerate period when viewed from the standpoint of morality? Are the heart and conscience of the American people corrupted? Is our civic life more rotten and degenerate than it was in earlier periods of American history? Is the golden age of American history in the past? Are the writers and lecturers accurate when they tell us that civic virtue is dead, that bribery and corruption run riot as never before, that wealth has corrupted young and old, that the young of to-day are less upright and righteous than those who lived a few decades ago?

Or is this loud-swelling cry merely the echo of the voice of pessimists who have gone before? Pessimists have their value; but an oversupply of their doctrine leads to stagnation and despair. Let the present be weighed in the balances, and be compared with the past. We are prone to emphasize the virtues of the leaders and of the masses who lived and died in the earlier years of our history; both teachers and writers too often slight the dark and gloomy features of our past national life because of a warped and mistaken view of patriotism. It is the purpose of this article to calmly and dispassionately present some evidence, chiefly contemporary, as to the real moral standards at various stages of our national development.

A colonial clergyman, Jonathan Boucher, of the period immediately preceding the War of the Revolution bewailed the evil and degenerate conditions of the prerevolutionary era in terms which sound strangely familiar. The general virtue of people had sadly declined, he declared; and in proof of the assertion, pointed to the irreverence of the children, the unsympathetic attitude assumed by the rich toward the poor, and the shocking infidelity to the marriage vows. The mature man always emphasizes the untoward actions of the rising generation; the good old times of his boyhood invariably take on the roseate hue of enchantment. But perhaps this clergyman was mistaken or a dyspeptic; possibly his picture is all awry. Unfortunately, history calmly and unsympathetically teaches that many of the men of the Revolutionary period were smugglers, that they had accumulated their wealth in ways as dark and devious as any followed by our modern corporate buccaneers. Indeed in the midst of the turmoil of the war—a period often quoted as one of high and noble endeavor—Washington cried out: "Speculation, peculation, engrossing, forestalling, afford too many proofs of the decay of public virtue." Turning our attention for a moment to a later period of national danger, we are placed face to face with similar shameful events. The history of the Civil War tariffs is a depressing story of human greed and selfishness. Smuggling again grew to be an organized system. Traders and manu-

facturers cheated the government right and left. One investigating committee discovered \$17,000,000 of pure graft in a contract amounting to \$50,000,000. Men in high positions were accused of "winking" at the sending of supplies through our lines into the South. The canned beef scandals do not look so enormous when placed side by side with those of the so-called halcyon days of civic virtue and patriotic fervor.

It may be urged that these were periods of extraordinary stress; and that a war always brings the evil passions of men to the surface. What were the moral conditions when the land was not troubled by war? In 1837 a newspaper presents this picture: "It is scarcely possible to realize the extent to which public morals in the United States have degenerated within the period of the last six or eight years. A new age, indeed, seems to have sprung suddenly upon us. We look in vain among our public men—we mean among those who are in authority—for those high examples of political integrity and elevated moral worth which once distinguished the councils of our country." In 1835, another paper speaks of the "grasping avarice and monopoly" which has "shorn us of many of our rights." In the good old days when James Monroe was President, a newspaper printed this gem of pessimistic literature: "Bad Times.—*Honesty* has fled from the world, and *Sincerity* is fallen asleep; *Piety* has hidden herself, and *Justice* cannot find the way; the *Helper* is not at home, and *Charity* lies sick; *Benevolence* is under arrest, and *Faith* is nearly extinguished; the *Virtues* go a-begging, and *Truth* has long since been buried; *Credit* is turned crazy, and *Conscience* is nailed on the wall." No modern "muck raker" or yellow journalist has been able to paint a darker picture than this drawn by his predecessor of three generations ago.

The political "machine," the "boss," the bold and unscrupulous lobby—surely these excrescences upon our body politic are recent growths, the products of the evil times which have fallen upon the land since the Civil War. Again, the tradition of the good old times proves to be false when it is dragged out of the mists of hearsay and placed under the white light of investigation. In 1834, an Albany newspaper declared:

"The power of the lobby is almost irresistible—it is exercised in various ways—either by holding out inducements of gilded bait, or threats of coercion and pecuniary embarrassment." Van Buren, Weed, Clinton and Burr were "machine" politicians of a high order; their successors have only added a few cogs and levers. The machine is now more complex, but the fundamental principles remain almost unchanged. Corruption in cities is by no means a phenomenon of recent growth; the work of Tammany did not begin with Tweed. In 1830, a New York newspaper made the following illuminating statement as to the importance of this political machine: "The Tammany grinding machine has turned out the following names, which all who hold office or even expect to get any, are ordered to vote as the assembly ticket." It is clear that, at this time, the gentle art of "packing a meeting" and of "howling down" an opponent was frequently and effectively practiced. In New York City, a few years later, "shoulder hitters" were utilized to force nominations at conventions.

The political manipulators of earlier times were not, however, restricted to these crude and forceful methods of political chicanery. The following extract, quoted from a history of Tammany Hall, clearly shows that the "gum shoe" politician of to-day cannot mix oil and water in the political cauldron more successfully than did Fernando Wood of New York half a century ago. "Though backed by the dregs of the city on the one hand, Wood did not neglect to secure some 'respectability' on the other. During the campaign he received a testimonial signed by some of the leading bankers and merchants, praising him and his administration and expressing the hope of his reelection. Nearly all of the signers, it was afterwards disclosed, profited by Wood's placing of city funds or buying of city goods."

Gambling and speculation, it is often asserted, are on the increase; the mass of the people, we are told, are becoming infected as never before by the gambling mania. Omitting any account of the vast amount of speculation which has accompanied the settlement of the Western portions of the United States, of which much might be and has been written, a brief

consideration of the prevalence of the lottery during the early part of the nineteenth century is sufficient to forever dispel the notion that gambling is more general to-day than it was in the days when the republic was young. During the first quarter of last century, churches and schools raised money, bridges and roads were built, and taxes were collected by means of the lottery. The advertising columns of the newspapers were sprinkled with notices of lottery drawings. Everybody—rich and poor, young and old, men and women—bought lottery tickets. In Philadelphia alone, in 1833, over two hundred offices were open for the sale of lottery tickets. In 1832, in nine states, it was estimated that over \$66,000,000—an enormous sum at that time—were spent in the purchase of the opportunity “to get something for nothing” in a lottery drawing. The evil reached such enormous proportions that anti-lottery laws began to appear upon the statute books of different states. The gambling spirit remained unquenched; in 1843, a reputable Philadelphia newspaper estimated that over \$3,000 had been recently raised in order to effect the repeal of the anti-lottery law of the State of Pennsylvania.

Nearly fourscore years ago, the Prison Discipline Society, after a careful investigation, estimated that in four of the original thirteen colonies—Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland—not less than twenty-three thousand persons were annually imprisoned for debt—for debts which, in the great majority of cases, were under twenty dollars each. These human beings were incarcerated, not in Russia or in Turkey, but in “the land of the free” at the time when Andrew Jackson lived in the White House. Indeed, one case is on record in which a man was imprisoned for thirty days because he owed a debt of two cents. And this is not all. In many cases the fuel and food furnished these imprisoned debtors—not criminals—were forthcoming only through the bounty of the Humane Society or of some individual. Is it necessary, in order to complete the details of this dark and repulsive picture, to point to the frequent resort to cruel and degrading methods of punishing criminals or to the brutal treatment of the insane? Is it necessary to relate the revolting facts about the public flog-

ging of persons convicted of crimes, or to speak of the gala days when public executions took place? The good old times, when placed under the microscope of the real historical investigator, reveal political corruption and chicanery, oppression of the poor and the weak by the rich and the strong, gambling and drunkenness, viciousness and licentiousness, avarice and greed.

The man who adulterates his products or who does not live up to his building contract is in reality closely akin to the individual who puts all the small potatoes in the bottom of the bushel basket, or to the famous enterprising Yankee who sold wooden nutmegs. The industrial magnate who foists well-watered stock upon an unsuspecting but eager public is the modern prototype of the frontier horse trader who thoughtfully doctored his decrepit animal just before the anticipated arrival of the prospective purchaser. Electricity, the railroad and the large factory have modified the art of the grafter and of the genteel swindler by making it more intricate and more illusive, and have increased the absolute amount of graft; but it is very doubtful if they have caused a lowering of the moral tone. On the contrary, it may well be urged that concentration of population and of industry, going hand in hand with a larger market area and greater mutual interdependence, are tending to accentuate those altruistic and humanitarian sentiments which deprecate graft, parasitism and plunder irrespective of the particular guise under which these evils appear.¹

Graft is as old as government itself, but it is relatively less, rather than more, important to-day than in preceding eras. It is not proven that the American people are entering upon a period of moral decadence. On the contrary, the public conscience seems to be growing more tender. It responds readily to the misfortunes of the weak and the inefficient; it cries out against corruption in high places, and it is touched by acts which in earlier times would have passed unnoticed. This is evidenced by the recent outcry against the acceptance by party managers of contributions made by corporations, by the execration of the

¹ See "Humanitarianism, Past and Present," by the writer. *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ETHICS*, October, 1906.

insurance magnates, and by the recent bitter struggles against municipal corruption. The average public man of to-day has as high, or a higher, moral standard than had his predecessor of past generations; but more is required of him. He must walk more circumspectly than did the politician of 1830, 1856, or 1876. While it is commendable to emphasize the virtues of the great men of the past, it must not be forgotten that they were human, not superhuman. They were biased and prejudiced by personal and business interests; they were liable to err and not immune from corruption; they wished "to get out the vote" and to reward their friends. Too great emphasis upon the glories of the past, accompanied by forgetfulness as to the dark side of our history, gradually evolves a carapace which shelters the pessimist from the darts of earnest men of hopefulness. The earlier writers of our history text-books, blinded by an absurd idea of patriotism, have much for which they must answer. The *meliorists* are the hope of the nation; extreme bigoted pessimists or blind optimists are equally dangerous.

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